

# Hillandale

## News

No 200 October 1994





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Tuesday 31 January 1995



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# Hillandale News

The Official Journal of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society

Founded in 1919

Patrons: Oliver Berliner and Kathleen Darby



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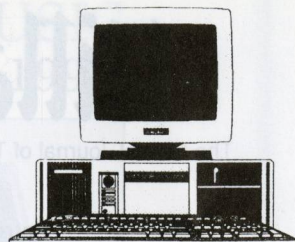
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**Front cover illustration:** William Barry Owen. See Peter Martland's article on page 123  
(Photograph by courtesy of EMI Music Ltd.)



## EDITOR'S DESK



### 200th issue of *Hillandale News*

*Hillandale News* has reached its 200th issue. We have come a long way from the first issue of 34 years ago, which was a single foolscap sheet folded in the middle to give four pages. We owe a great debt to the late Bob Wormald who started the whole idea and got the first issue off the ground. Ernie Bayly was responsible for putting illustrations into the journal and he held the fort for several years gradually improving the standard. Another outstanding editor was Christopher Proudfoot. He was at the helm for many years as well. The standard of the articles and the quality of the production were substantially improved under his aegis. Peter Martland followed for a brief spell during which further improvements were made reflecting his academic background. Ted Cunningham took over when Peter was appointed Chairman. Ted introduced a welcome touch of humour to the magazine. It fell to Charles Levin to be the first to use the computer. Thanks to my predecessors I have been able to build on their successes and adopt new information technology and desktop publishing techniques into the production of the journal. To celebrate the occasion this issue has been expanded to 48 pages. I hope the readers will enjoy the variety of articles. Please keep up the good work and continue to send in articles for publication so that we can reach our 300th issue and beyond.

### October Meeting

George Woolford will be continuing his look at the early days with *1905 and Patti*. Come along and have an interesting and instructive evening with a few surprises.

### November Meeting

Joe Pengelly will be coming up from the depths of Devon to talk about his latest design of cylinder playing machine. He assures me that he can play all types of cylinder on it. Joe will let us hear some transcriptions of cylinders he has made using this machine. I would urge all Ediphiles and other cylinder lovers to come along and hear more from cylinders than they have ever heard before. It will be worth your while!

Please note that material intended for inclusion in *Hillandale News* must reach the Editor not later than **six weeks before the first day of the month of issue**.

Hence the deadline for the **December** issue will be **15th October 1994**.

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# **THE BEGINNINGS OF THE GRAMOPHONE COMPANY**

**by Peter Martland**

## **The Problem**

For some time now, I have been researching and writing about the history of the record industry. During the course of this research, I have been drawn to the problem of discovering just when the original business that became The Gramophone Company was founded. The problem became more acute when the present company EMI Records Ltd began to think about its centenary, an event due to be celebrated later this decade. In an attempt to resolve the matter, I set about examining all the relevant pre-1900 papers relating to The Gramophone Company held at the EMI Music Archive, The Library of Congress, Washington DC, The Board of Trade Papers in the Public Record Office at Kew, and also files at Companies House, London. As a result of this survey, I realised that traditional accounts of The Gramophone Company's origins simply did not match the evidence contained in these original sources. Until I began my research, I had believed that the business was founded in April 1898, when Trevor Williams formed The Gramophone Company at the Hotel Cecil.<sup>1</sup> Despite my best efforts, I was unable to locate any evidence to support this. On the contrary, I found there were papers revealing a quite different, and more credible account of the formation of this business, and significantly one that pushes the date of its beginnings back a full year.

## **The Evidence**

The evidence to support this fresh interpretation of The Gramophone Company's origins is drawn from a number of sources, held mainly at the EMI Music Archive, including The Emile Berliner Papers, The William Barry Owen Papers, The Eldridge R. Johnson Papers, The Victor Talking Machine Company Papers, Alfred Clark's unpublished memoirs, and the pre-1900 company formation and business papers.<sup>2</sup> In addition to EMI Music Archive sources, I have drawn on The Board of Trade company registration and returns (BT31) files held at The Public Record Office in Kew, and also The EMI Records Ltd file at Companies House in London. It was from these sources that the following evidence has emerged.

In July 1897, William Barry Owen (1860-1914), the former General Manager of The National Gramophone Company, a New York-based marketing organisation with an exclusive contract to sell the products of The Berliner Gramophone Company in the United States, left New York bound for London.<sup>3</sup> The gramophone's inventor Emile Berliner (1851-1929) had sent Owen to Britain as his agent, with the twin tasks of establishing a British trade in gramophone goods and finding partners willing to invest in a wider gramophone enterprise.<sup>4</sup> By the end of July 1897, Owen was in London where from The Hotel Cecil, a central London location on The Strand, he began to trade in gramophone goods.<sup>5</sup> A brilliant salesman, Owen quickly created a small London and provincial



dealership network for his products. Dealers placed orders for goods with him, and he purchased them through The National Gramophone Company in New York. From the start, he called his business "The Gramophone Company". In common with most small - and some large - businesses at that time, Owen's venture was not incorporated as a joint stock company, its legal existence was merely the person of William Barry Owen.

Unfortunately for Owen, finding dealers and markets for his gramophone goods proved much easier than finding partners willing to invest in his business. And, it was not until the end of 1897 that he met up with lawyer Edmund Trevor Lloyd Williams (1859-1946). Williams became interested in the venture, and in February 1898, during a visit to the United States, he concluded an important agreement with Emile Berliner. The terms of this agreement included an undertaking by Williams to form a partnership with Owen, which involved them taking over Owen's existing trade. In addition, Williams agreed to invest up to £5,000 to further exploit and develop the British and later European gramophone business. According to this agreement, Berliner received a fifteen percent royalty, based on the retail price of goods sold. The agreement also contained a clause giving Williams an option to purchase at a later date Berliner's valuable British and European patents.

In March 1898, after his return to London, Williams and Owen (who was to manage the business) were joined in the partnership by Edgar Storey, a wealthy business friend of Williams. This extension of Owen's original venture continued to trade as an unincorporated business under the self-styled title "The Gramophone Company". The business moved to premises at 31 Maiden Lane, just off The Strand, and the business expanded. In the late spring of 1898, supply difficulties with the New York-based National Gramophone Company forced Berliner, Williams and Owen to reconsider the way the British venture did its business. One result of their discussions was a decision by Emile Berliner to create a European record-making facility. Berliner decided to locate the plant at the German telephone factory in Hannover he owned jointly with his brother Joseph.

In July 1898, Emile Berliner sent his nephew Joseph Sanders (1877-1960) to Germany to set up the plant. Sanders was a matrix and pressing expert, who had previously served an engineering apprenticeship at the Hannover factory.<sup>6</sup> Sailing for Europe with Sanders, to supply the new record factory with British-made recordings, came the recording engineer Fred Gaisberg (1873-1951). Whilst Sanders went to Hannover as a Berliner employee, Gaisberg came to London as an Owen employee. There, he began to create the first catalogue of British-made records.

In December 1898, in order to both protect their investment and comply with local laws, Emile and Joseph Berliner incorporated their record pressing business as Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft.<sup>7</sup> In the meantime, the British venture remained the unincorporated property of the three partners, Owen, Williams and Storey. In the Spring of 1899, the partners expanded their business into Europe. They entered into a joint venture in France with Alfred Clark (1874-1950), who later became The Gramophone Company's longest serving Managing Director.<sup>8</sup> Between them they incorporated a marketing organisation called Compagnie Française du Gramophone. The partners owned 74 per cent of the shares in this company, whilst Clark owned the balance. The partnership continued until September 1899, when Trevor Williams incorporated a private company (ie one in which the shares were not traded on the stock market) he called The Gramophone Company Ltd. This company had a capital of £150,000 in 150,000 £1 shares (only 100,000 shares were in fact ever issued). In an agreement filed with the company formation documents,

*Views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor.*



Trevor Williams sold the partners' assets to the new venture for a combination of cash and shares in the new firm.<sup>9</sup> Williams, Storey and Owen (the new company's Managing Director) joined The Gramophone Company's board.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to acquiring the partners' assets, the new Company purchased a controlling interest in the Berliner brother's pressing plant, which was reconstituted as Deutsche Grammophon Aktien Gesellschaft.<sup>11</sup> Thereafter, this business was expanded beyond its original manufacturing functions, taking on the additional responsibility - from a base in Berlin - of creating German, Russian and Central European marketing organisations. During 1899, The Gramophone Company formed sub-companies in Italy, Holland, Belgium and Scandinavia. In addition, local and regional distributive networks were set up across Europe, into Russia and beyond. To meet the needs of these important and potentially highly profitable markets, it proved essential to produce catalogues of locally recorded music. In 1899, to overcome this problem, the first European recording expedition was undertaken by Fred Gaisberg and William Sinkler Darby (1878-1950), another Berliner trained sound engineer.

In December 1900, a new Company was incorporated called The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd.<sup>12</sup> This new business had a capital of £600,000, made up of 500,000 £1 ordinary shares and 100,000 £1 preference shares. The venture was incorporated as a public company (one in which the shares could be traded on the Stock Market). The purpose of this fresh incorporation was to purchase the assets of The Gramophone Company Ltd (this company was subsequently dissolved), to acquire the balance of the shares in Deutsche Grammophon Aktien Gesellschaft, and also the European patents of the Lambert typewriter. Although the new business began to trade on the first day of the new century (1 January 1901), for accounting purposes the business began 30th June 1900.<sup>13</sup> In 1907, this Company was re-named The Gramophone Company Ltd. In 1931, when Electric and Musical Industries was formed (the result of a merger between The Gramophone Company and The Columbia Graphophone Company), the new Company acquired the shares in both businesses, and subsequently converted them into private companies. In 1965, The Gramophone Company's name was changed to EMI Records Ltd, and thereafter all of EMI's record activities were channelled through this business.

## **The EMI Centenary**

In summary, the foundation of the business that now trades as EMI Music Ltd, is linked by a clear continuity of trade, structure, organisation and personnel to William Barry Owen's original 1897 venture, and not to a non-event in April 1898. This continuity is by any yardstick remarkable, and one that deserves to be marked not only by the Company, but also by record collectors, and the wider music-loving public. Clearing up the ambiguity has had one important by-product: EMI Records is now actively planning a series of major events to celebrate its 1897 centenary. One project well advanced is the publication in 1997 of a book to mark the centenary of this remarkable business venture. This book is currently being written by Ruth Edge and the present writer.



## References:

- 1 For two published accounts of The Gramophone Company Ltd., see Jerrold Northrop Moore pp. 26-27 *A Voice in Time* (London 1976), and page 1 of the booklet in the EMI 1973, seventy-fifth anniversary LP set *A Voice to Remember* (EMSP 75).
- 2 I would like to thank Mrs Ruth Edge, the EMI Archivist, for her help and support in the preparation of this article, and to EMI Records Ltd. for their kind permission in allowing me to cite and quote from copyright documents.
- 3 It has not been possible to discover the precise date of Owen's departure from New York. For despite scouring the sadly incomplete holdings of passenger lists at the Public Record Office, Owen's name cannot be found on any passenger list for ships inward bound to a British port from New York. There is however indirect evidence (in the form of letters of farewell from Emile Berliner and others), suggesting that Owen left New York on or around 14th July 1897.
- 4 See letters Emile Berliner to William Barry Owen, February to July 1897 (Emile Berliner Papers, EMI Music Archive).
- 5 The earliest business letters to Owen from dealers, date from early August 1897 (see Company Formation Papers 1897, EMI Music Archive).
- 6 Information taken from 1950s correspondence between Joseph Sanders and B. L. Aldridge of RCA Victor (Robert Sanders Collection, Library of Congress, Washington DC, USA).
- 7 See Company Formation Papers 1898, (EMI Music Archive).
- 8 For an account of these moves see Alfred Clark *A Record* (Unpublished MS. Clark Papers, EMI Music Archive).
- 9 Although the business was sold in September 1899, for accounting purposes the new company's takeover was backdated to May 1899. Details of The Gramophone Company Ltd. are held among Board of Trade papers at the Public Record Office, Kew in file BT31/86587/148127.
- 10 For details see Company Formation Papers 1898, (EMI Music Archive), and Board of Trade File BT31/86587/148127 (PRO, Kew).
- 11 See Company Formation Papers 1898, (EMI Music Archive).
- 12 For details of The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd. see EMI Records Ltd. file 68,172 at Companies House, London.
- 13 See Company Formation Papers 1900, (EMI Music Archive). See also EMI Music Ltd. file at Companies House, London.



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# 70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE EXHIBITION AND ITS RECORDED LEGACY

by Frank Andrews

"I declare this Exhibition open" - such were the words which were broadcast by radio into British homes and into those around the world when King George V opened the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley Park, Middlesex on April 23rd 1924 (St. George's Day). St. George is the patron Saint of England. Edward, Prince of Wales, (in his capacity as President of the Exhibition) had just welcomed his parents King George and Queen Mary to Wembley.

Wembley Park was once described as one of the most beautiful parks of Greater London. The local Wembley Council had opposed the site but were overridden. The Park was ideally situated for easy access by public transport. Wembley Central on the Euston to Midlands and the North main line; Wembley Hill, on the Marylebone to Sheffield and Home Counties line and the Metropolitan Railway's underground line, with a station at Wembley Park itself, were augmented by the construction of a new station within the exhibition ground (the Wembley Exhibition Station) served direct from Marylebone Station. A large omnibus station was constructed adjacent to Wembley Hill station, which was itself about 150 yards from the Metropolitan Street Tramways system.

The opening speech gave The Gramophone Co. Ltd., the opportunity to demonstrate what, according to Edward Fowler (one of its recording engineers), "was undoubtedly the greatest single development in the gramophone's history - electrical recording. We made our first experimental

record in 1924, of the speech by King George V at the opening of the British Empire Exhibition." The recordings were, of course, taken from a radio receiver and not directly from the Wembley Exhibition Stadium, where the opening ceremony was performed.

The recording of His Majesty's speech on the 23rd April was accomplished with remarkably successful results by The Gramophone Co. Ltd. Copies were reproduced on HMV records by which means the opening speech was broadcast by the British Broadcasting Company Ltd. No copies were sold to the public.

It was a feat of which the company could be justly proud as there were tremendous technical difficulties and it was only by the exercise of judgement and the experience of the recording expert that they were overcome and a really good recording obtained.

The King had been kept informed of progress and graciously gave his permission for the recording to be broadcast, for the benefit of the very large numbers of his subjects who had been unable to hear the morning transmission of April 23rd. The King was reported to have been an interested listener to his own voice. Copies of the recording were presented to the King in a beautifully bound album covered in royal blue morocco leather, tooled in gold.

A letter of acknowledgement, written from Buckingham Palace, dated May 31st and addressed to Mr William Manson, then manager of The Gramophone Co. Ltd., and



was received from the King's private secretary, Lord Stamfordham. The letter read:

"Dear Mr Manson,

I have submitted to the King the album containing the records of His Majesty's speech at Wembley at the opening of the British Empire Exhibition, and the King desires me to convey to you his best thanks for this interesting memento of the occasion, which His Majesty is very glad to possess.

Yours very truly,

(signed) Stamfordham."

The metal matrices were presented to the British Museum for preservation, a suggestion which had met with the King's approval. Presumably they are still there.

For the following six months, Wembley welcomed visitors from places far and wide.

Each of the Dominions, India, the Colonies and other sections of the Empire displayed their crafts, cultures, arts, histories and their various manufactures. Britain itself displayed its textiles, chemicals, mining and engineering capacities and products.

The Stadium had various "Pageants of Empire", and military and searchlight tattoos were also presented. My grandfather, who was a night watchman for a new housing estate being built close to the exhibition ground, related to me how the Canadian cowboys and Red Indians tethered, fed and worked out their horses on the remaining open grassland.

Although unlikely to have been produced with the exhibition in mind, the Aeolian Co. Ltd. issued a two-sided disc in the opening month. This disc, Aeolian Vocalion D 02147, consisted of four *Australian Bush Songs* from a set by William G. James,



Exterior view of the "His Master's Voice" Pavilion



sung by the Australian bass Malcolm McEachern.

In May, *An Address on the British Empire* spoken by The Right Hon. W. F. Massey, the Premier of New Zealand, was issued on HMV D 841 coupled with Peter Dawson singing *God Bless New Zealand* by J. J. Wood, accompanied by a chorus and orchestra.

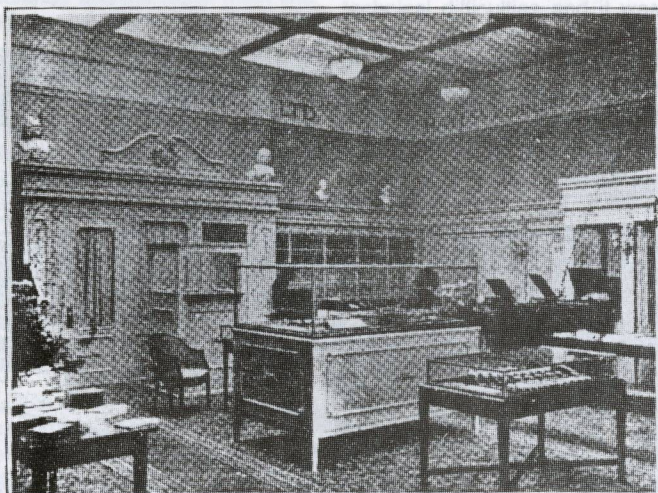
The Australian Newcastle Steelworks Brass Band, which was on tour and competing in Great Britain, was selected to play at a Royal luncheon at which the King and Queen of Romania were present. This was took place at the Exhibition. 15,000 people had attended the band's farewell concert before leaving Perth, Western Australia for the British tour. The band was due to do a month's stint at the exhibition in August. The Aeolian Co. Ltd. issued a special supplement of the band's London record-

ings with its July 1924 supplement of its Aco records. (12" F 33058 and 33059 and 10" G 15455 to 15460 inclusive). Some recordings were issued on Beltona. The band made some recordings later for Imperial.

Already issued in the popular repertoire lists was the foxtrot song *Wembling at Wembley with You* on HMV B 1809. This was issued in mid-May 1924 with Aco G 15415, Beltona 495 and Homochord H-591 following in their various versions. Winner 4004 was a straight song.

Ernie Mayne, the British Music Hall comedian, brought the Exhibition into his songs repertoire with *It's Wembley Over Here* (recorded for J. E. Hough Ltd. on Winner 4036). F. W. Ramsey (pseudonym) had *Let's Go To Wembley* on Regal G 8195.

That summer proved to be a rather wet one and many visitors to the exhibition spent



A Corner of the Interior Salon of the "His Master's Voice" Pavilion



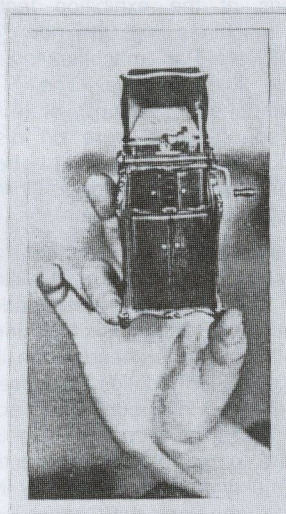
many a miserable day trying to avoid getting wet. The conditions were pointed up in humorous fashion on another disc on the Winner label (4045), called *Mr and Mrs Brown at Wembley*. This descriptive sketch tells the story of a married couple discovering that a visitor, from a country much accustomed to tropical rain, was enjoying the exhibition with the weather conditions being exactly what he was used to! Mr and Mrs Brown were played by Harry Bluff and Buena Bent. Columbia 3475 had *The Meanderings of Monty - Part 4: At Wembley* recited by Milton Hayes.

Winner recordings were also issued of the Wembley Exhibition Military Band on six discs (4006 to 4011 inclusive) and Ernie Mayne had a second humorous song in *How's Your Poor Old Feet* (Winner 4058), reflecting the not inconsiderable discomfort to the lower extremities caused by a

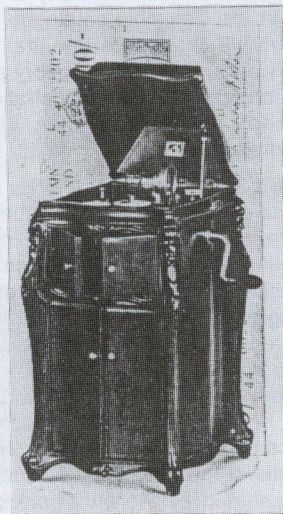
day's traipsing around the exhibition ground. Some foxtrot versions were issued as well.

On yet another Winner (4049) Edward Merrick had recorded England, *Land of the Free*. This song had been specially composed by Harris for the Wembley Exhibition and where it had been sung by a mixed choir of 10,000 voices. Peter Dawson also recorded it for HMV who issued it on B 1858 coupled with George W. Byng's composition *The Empire Calling*.

The Chappell Piano Co. Ltd. had an exhibition stand where Brunswick records (for which they were the sole concessionaire) and Clifftophone gramophones were on display. A recording studio was also set up where visiting celebrities, or others, could make private recordings. Mr W. E. Clifton, the inventor, was in charge of recording.



The size of the Queen's Doll's House Gramophone compared with a hand



- and with a 10/- Treasury Note



The Gramophone Co. Ltd.'s stand in the Palace of Industry was considered by many to be the most dignified and beautiful as any in the whole exhibition. It was a simulated first-class, double-fronted West End shop-cum-salon. The frontage was an imposing central entrance. A large oval framed painting of the HMV trademark was above the door of the shop which was called "His Master's Voice".

The internal salon was decorated in ivory and gold. Four audition rooms were placed on the right and left sides of the salon, each with several instruments and record stands. Every building occupied by the company at its 30-acre site in Hayes, Middlesex could be seen in a scale model of the site built to the scale of 24 feet to the inch.

The Columbia Graphophone Co. Ltd. presented a four-sided open display of the new Grafonola machines in models of every description. These surrounded a central salon decorated inside with pictures illustrating the subjects of many of the recordings in the Columbia catalogue. A progressive display revealed how the "New Process" were made. An obligatory sound-proof audition room held demonstrations of "the state of the art" as then achieved by Columbia.

Barnett Samuel and Sons Ltd.'s stand in the Palace of Arts was visited by their Majesties where the latest Decca machines and the new line of Melograms were on sale. Their Majesties were particularly interested in Melogram Model No.6. The King also inspected a John Gray banjo, which had been autographed by his son, the Prince of Wales, when on a tour of India. Another item, in which both were interested, was the Decca portable which had crossed the Atlantic in the airship R. 34 and which had been signed by the principal officers in its Dulcifix.

The Duophone Syndicate Ltd. demonstrated their machines, featuring the double

sound-box and tone-arm and a gramophone stop of simple design.

Alfred Graham Ltd. (the first firm to import Brunswick records) had a stand in the Palace of Engineering where they displayed Algraphone gramophones and the Amplion loudspeaker, which could be attached to gramophone horns to allow radio broadcasts to be heard more clearly.

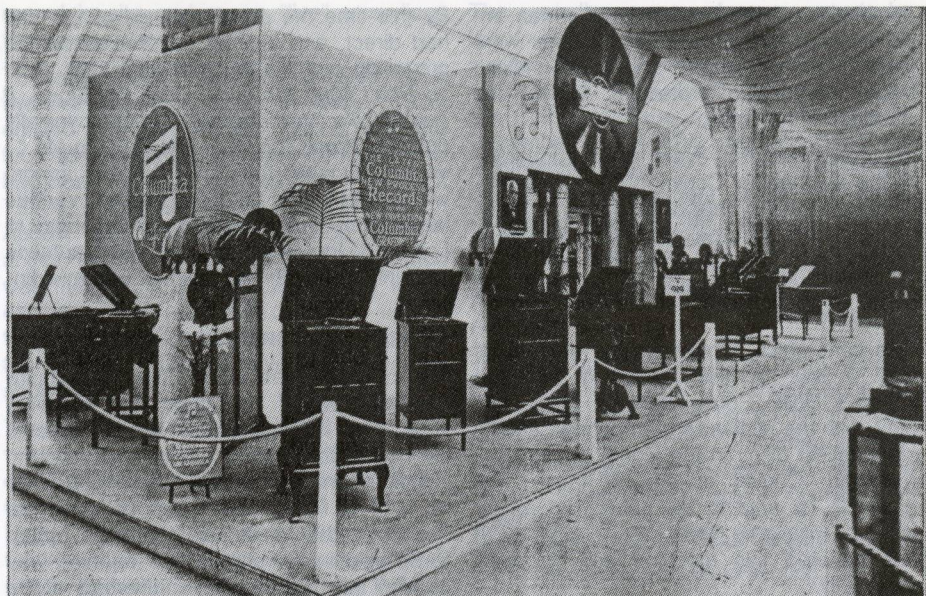
J. E. Hough Ltd., of Edison Bell Works, showed its Discaphone machines with Velvet Face, Winner and The Bell records along with enlarged samples of its various types of Chromic needles. A listening booth was available.

Pathé Frères Pathéphone Ltd. featured its portable machines, among other models, and its vertical-cut Pathé discs and lateral-cut Actuelles were in constant demonstration in a sound-proofed room. The Universal sound-box was another strong feature of the display.

Other stands at the exhibition featured Perophone machines with the new "Pixie Grippa" and "Peter Pan" machines in standard and de luxe formats. The "Three Muses" gramophones, which featured the "Tremusa" sound-boxes were on display and W. H. Reynolds (1923) Ltd. had a unique model, the "Baby Pedestal" gramophone, suitable for use in the nursery.

Two important changes affecting the gramophone industry occurred during the exhibition period. In spite of a protest made by The Federation of British Music Industries to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the lifting of the McKenna tariff duties, proposed in May, were effected in August. The Federation had regarded the proposal "as being a most serious blow to the prospects of continued employment and prosperity in the industry and urges upon the Chancellor the desirability of a public and impartial enquiry into the consequences of the removal of the duties." There were fears that the pre-war





Outside View of the Columbia Co.'s fine Exhibit at Wembley



A Corner of the interior Salon - Columbia Exhibit



domination of the market by German imports would come back if the duties were lifted. The pianoforte and clock-making trades were also protesting against the abolition of the tariffs.

The other important event was the founding of the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society Ltd. to take care of the rights of those whose works were being adopted for use in gramophone records, pianolas and other musical instruments and for use with the cinematograph.

One item which should not be forgotten is that it was at this exhibition that the Queen's Dolls' House went on public display, with the miniature gramophone and its six smallest discs in the world, all perfectly recorded. Copies of one of these was available for sale to the public. An earlier issue of *Hillandale News* (No.73 June 1973) has covered this machine and its discs more fully.

*Pasadena, Horsey Keep Your Tail Up* and *Felix Kept on Walking* had been among the most popular songs during the early weeks Felix being a silent cartoon film character. A "live" representation of the cat strolled the grounds, much as Mickey Mouse does today in Disneyland parks. My parents were photographed with Felix by the almost instant Daguerrotype tin plate method, a souvenir still in my possession.

The adverse weather is known to have kept down the number of visitors to the 23 larger exhibition halls and the events in the stadium such as the Rodeo, an Empire Boy Scouts Jamboree and the Pageant of Empire, which took three days to complete its whole display. Other attractions were the large amusement park, the "Never Stopping Railway", the Boating Lake and the electric transport cars (for taking visitors from point to point). The lowest estimate put the total number of visitors attending as 10 million with the final day suffering fog, thunder and lightning and finally snow!

By this time the popular songs of the day had direct, and indirect, comments on the prevailing month's weather with titles such as *Don't Mind the Rain, After the Storm, It Looks Like Rain* capped by the cynically optimistic song *It ain't gonna Rain no Mo'.*" I do not suggest that any of these songs, which were all recorded under various labels, were written directly with response to London's foul weather, but their aptness certainly made them potential money-spinners.

## REPEAT PERFORMANCE - 1925

The decision was made that the Empire Exhibition would be staged the following year when more pleasant weather was to be hoped for. It was during that second period, opened once again by King George V, with H.R.H. The Duke of York as President, that electrical recordings began to be sold in the shops. The opening was on May 9th (the fifteenth anniversary of the proclamation of George V as King). The Exhibition closed on October 31st 1925.

In February a reminder of the Grand Military Tattoo at Wembley was issued on Winner 4149 and 4150 with recordings by the Drums, Fifes, Bugles and Pipes of H. M. Scots Guards.

One of the first discs to be issued referring to the resuscitated exhibition was on Regal G 8367 where Charlie Austin, the British Music Hall comedian known as Parker P. C., had a two-part descriptive, entitled *Parker at Wembley*. There was a paucity of new material and the songs and sketches referring to the 1924 Exhibition in the previous year's catalogues had not been deleted, and they were equally relevant for the 1925 event.

It was only in the last month or so of the second exhibition that The Gramophone Co. Ltd and The Columbia Graphophone Co. Ltd. had been recording electrically and they did not have sufficient experience to



record in situ and so no "live" recordings were undertaken.

To some extent, this was rectified by a two-disc Columbia issue in March 1926, entitled *Wembley Military Tattoo*, with the four sides recorded by many of those who had been a part of the Wembley Torchlight Tattoo, which had opened in the Stadium in August 1925 and which, after 56 performances, closed on October 17th. The Tattoo was the outstanding success of the whole exhibition, with hundreds of people unable to gain admission at each performance. By the close 2 million people had seen the show.

The artists on Columbia 9073 and 9074 were the Regimental Band of H. M. Grenadier Guards with Drummers of the 1st Battn. Grenadier Guards and Pipers of the 1st Battn. Scots Guards, all conducted by Lt. George Miller. and the Stadium Choir directed by Henry Jaxon. Reviewing the two discs *The Phono Record* wrote: "...we now have the famous 'Wembley Tattoo' by the Columbia Co. ....The result of this brilliant combination (of performers) is a recording of a most authentic and interesting character, and with such a series of brilliant and thrilling records the reproduction forms, as others do, a very fine memento of the great Empire Exhibition. Surely nothing has stirred the British people so much as this magnificent display and we can thank the gramophone for providing us with such a fine and permanent rendering of a great occasion. It brings to the listener a most vivid display of the great Wembley Tattoo."

*The Sound Wave* remarked: "Really splendid records, with an open air feeling about them that is most realistic. The chorus singing is fine and the quality is delightfully full. The weakest point is the gong, deputising for Big Ben. ...We notice that the Columbia Company describe these discs as brilliant, vivid, thrilling and we cordially agree with them in every respect."

The recordings were, of course, made by the un-mentioned Western electrical recording method, as were the two HMV discs C 1226 and C 1227, which had pre-empted the Columbia issue by being released in December 1925. This recording had the Regimental Band of H. M. Coldstream Guards, the Drummers of the 1st Battn. Grenadier Guards, the Pipers of the 1st Battn. Scots Guards and a Choir, all conducted by Lt. R. G. Evans. Columbia by having the Stadium Choir were slightly more authentic.

That was not the end of the Tattoo recordings, for in May 1926, The Gramophone Co. Ltd. issued another two record set, this time in the 10" size, on its Zonophone label. A 'House' military band, recorded as "The Home Guards Band", with a chorus, was conducted by Lt. R. G. Evans of H. M. Coldstream Guards. The Home Guards Band included a pipe band section.

In the same month, the same recordings were issued, with the same title, viz. *Wembley Military Tattoo* on the Homochord label, this time credited to The Homochord Military Band, Caledonian Pipers and Orpheus Choir.

The Gramophone Co. Ltd. had re-established its "His Master's Voice" shop for the 1925 exhibition, but there was very little reportage about what other businesses in the talking machine trade undertook to do.





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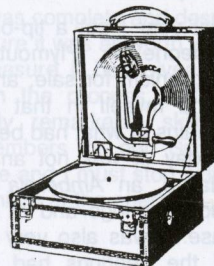
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## C.L.P.G.S. BOOKLIST

### *From Tinfoil to Stereo*

### The Acoustic Years of the Recording Industry 1877-1929

by Walter L. Welch and Leah Brodbeck Stenzel Burt

Foreword by George L. Frow

*From Tinfoil to Stereo*, the fundamental reference book of the sound recording industry, was last available in print in the late 1970s. It described the development of sound recording from early experiments that led to the invention of the tinfoil cylinder phonograph by Thomas Alva Edison in 1877 to the development of stereo technology in the mid-1950s.

This book is a revision and expansion of the first half of the earlier text - the critical acoustic era of phonograph history. It is full of new information by international experts and has several new photographs in it. A full review of this book will appear in the December issue of *Hillandale News*.

This book is now in stock and is available from the **C.L.P.G.S. Booklist**, c/o Don Moore, [redacted] Caistor, Lincolnshire LN7 6RX Price **£25** plus **10%** postage (U.K.) and **15%** postage (overseas).



# THE BEGGAR'S OPERA

by Paul Morris

I never thought that I would own an Edison *Opera* phonograph, and in a way I still don't, yet I think I have the next best thing. I'll explain.

Last year I got a tip-off from a friend that someone in Plymouth had an *Opera* mechanism for sale, and so the next day I found myself in that city, looking at the remains of what had been a fine machine in its day. It was not an *Opera* but a close relative, an *Amberola III*. It lacked reproducer, springs and of course, a horn and case. It was also very rusty externally, yet all the bearings had been carefully protected.

To buy it was to accept a challenge. It was not unreasonably priced, yet to restore it would cost a small fortune and would require me to find a source of all sorts of parts for copying. I was faced with a dilemma, should I restore it as an *Amberola* or an *Opera* or indeed should I restore it at all? Several friends had suggested I could construct an electric play-back unit, housed in a contemporary style case.

Many, though not myself, consider the *Opera* to be the acme of cylinder reproducers; however it comes pretty close and is acoustically superior to the box-horned *Amberola III*. The graceful design of the *Opera*, especially its earlier style mahogany box with its generous mouldings and attractive carrying handles made me decide that my phonograph was going to be an *Opera*, well, a re-born *Opera*.

There are only really two main differences between an *Amberola III* and an *Opera*: the *Opera*'s winding shaft is closer to the top plate and its horn port has a 90 degree

angle to accept the *Music Master* horn. Spurred on by the seemingly minor nature of these modifications, I enthusiastically began to write to friends and magazine contacts in order to enlist specialist help to enable me to complete the task.

Firstly, two new springs were purchased from Ron Sitko of New York, and these were duly fitted by Philip Knighton, "the gramophone man of Wellington". Now I could at least hear my machine, and its even, quiet performance gave me great hope for the things to come.

Mike Field consented to make the box, and the results of his labours have been greatly admired by all who have seen them. The finished products, to all intents and purposes, an exact replica of the original, made of 80-years-old mahogany, with a 'lovely piano finish' polish. Mike also made a winding handle and escutcheon in oxidized bronze finish.

Prompted by comments made by Miles Mallinson about how easy it was to make cygnet horn elbows ("You just go on hitting it" he had said) I asked Miles to make the special elbow needed for a self supporting *Music Master* horn. His efforts on my behalf, once again, made me realise how lucky I was to have such talented friends. This had out to be a rather more difficult task than Miles had forecast, but the results bear very close comparison with the original.

The wooden part of the horn was obtained from Hart Waseman of Utah. He is set up to make wood veneer horns, and although they have a (tough) plastic core, from without they closely resemble the original article. The sound from them is, in my



opinion, better than the all wood ones I've heard. They cost \$395 plus about \$50 shipping, and I had to pay £76 import duty, VAT and custom charges.

Clive Jones, of mechanical music and doll collection fame, kindly lent me an *Opera* carrying handle for copying, and Devon Metal Crafts, of Exmouth, did a great job with it. As you may read elsewhere, anybody who requires these handles can obtain them from me as I shall have a small batch made soon. They will be copper-plated and oxidized as originals.

The horn post problem was entrusted to Keith Badman, who produced a very elegant solution in the form of a mitred steel construction firmly held together with silver solder. Further modifications of a mainly cosmetic nature were carried out by my friend and close colleague, Stuart Wilkins.

The whole of the top works, as I said previously, were rusty, but I found that having removed the shellac varnish with methylated spirits, it rubbed down to an even brown when fine wire wool was used. Mike Hrycyszyn, an expert painter of model soldiers, volunteered his services and in a few hours he had completely repainted and relined the top works in a very acceptable manner.

At last the project was complete and despite initial qualms, I'm sure it was all worth while. Apart from the pleasure it has given me, I've learnt a lot in the process and I've witnessed the truly remarkable skills of talented fellow members of our Society. Now it is getting late and I must stop writing as I rather fancy a night at the opera.

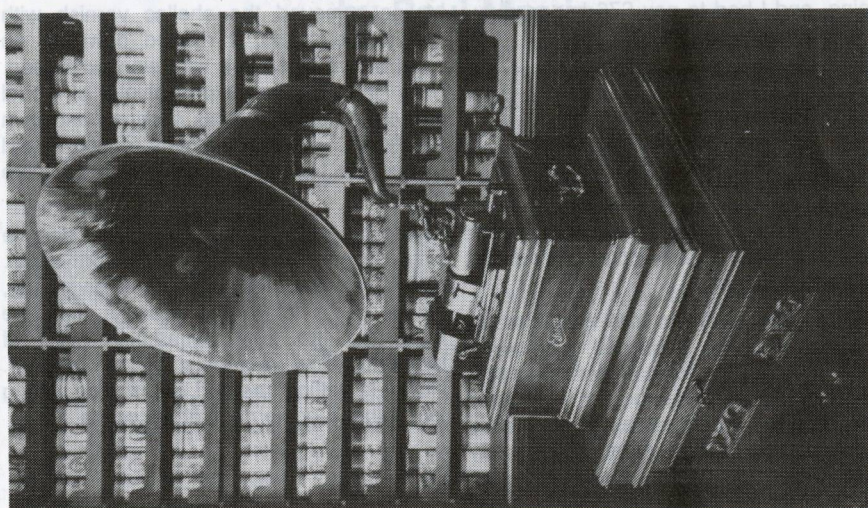
## Forthcoming Meetings in London

London Meetings are held at the National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, South Kensington, on the third Thursday evening of the month promptly at **6.45pm** (unless stated otherwise). Members' attention is drawn to the London Meetings Notice on page 100 of issue 188 (October 1992).

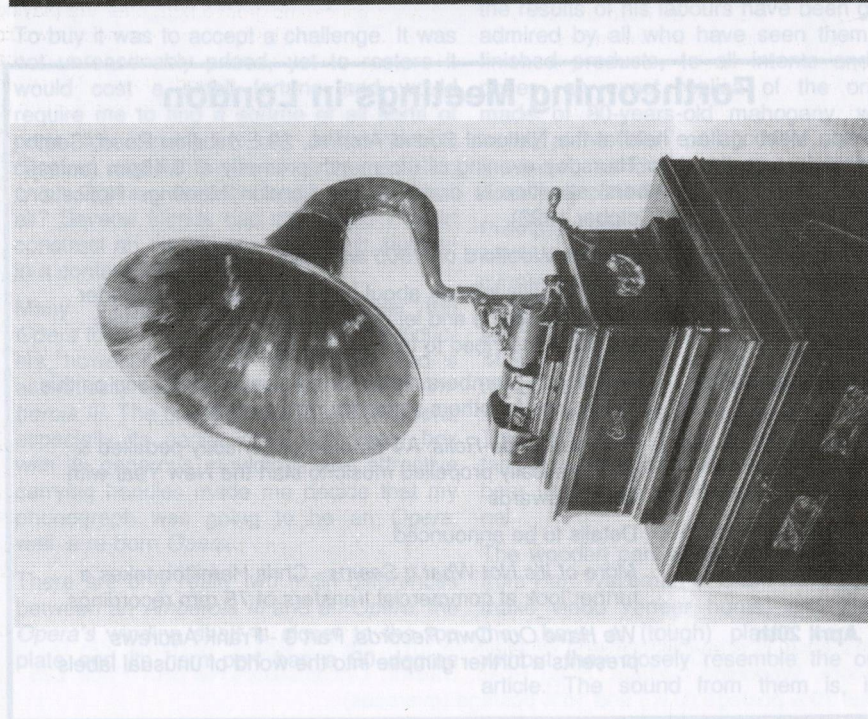
<b>October 20th</b>	George Woolford on <i>1905 and Patti</i>
<b>November 17th</b>	Joe Pengelly will talk about his latest design of cylinder playing machine and let us hear some of the cylinders he has transcribed to tape using this machine
<b>December 15th</b>	<i>Relations</i> - Members night - Bring along your choice on this theme and let others share your enjoyment
<b>January 19th 1995</b>	<i>Pianola Fol-de-Rolls</i> : A Potpourri of perfectly pedalled & pneumatically propelled music to start the New Year with Geoff Edwards
<b>February 16th</b>	Details to be announced.
<b>March 16th</b>	<i>More of It's Not What It Seems</i> - Chris Hamilton takes a further look at commercial transfers of 78 rpm recordings
<b>April 20th</b>	<i>We Have Our Own Records</i> , Part 3 - Frank Andrews presents a further glimpse into the world of unusual labels



THE BEGGAR'S OPERA  
 opinion, better than the original. The top works, as I said  
 heard. They cost \$295 plus about \$20 previously, but I found that  
 this  
 VAT



Two views of Paul Morris' reproduction Edison Opera





# BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

by Douglas T. Lorimer

In my years spent collecting records, I have taken an interest in every aspect of this fascinating hobby. I am interested in the music that they contain, the very pretty and unusual labels many records have, and the often quite tiny changes in the design of these labels which can enable one to date them quite accurately (if you know when the changes took place!). The many intricate systems which record companies used to number their records can often give us a clue to which company made certain labels (which is why collectors insist on matrix numbers where possible, because these are least likely to change when a recording is reissued by another company label). I often think that collectors of Jazz records have the edge on classical collectors, like myself, in this respect because they have insisted on matrix details in their literature long before any other branch of record collecting paid any attention to them.

The idea behind this article is however a much more apparently simple one. I have made an in-depth study of the grooves on records, and more particularly how the recording engineers chose to start and finish these grooves.

In the first disc records (Berliners) the playing grooves start a short distance from the edge of the record, and after the recording has finished there are usually one or two revolutions of blank grooves, which then simply stop, leaving the sound-box to travel wherever frictional drag will take it! When paper labels came along a few years later this caused numerous accidents, and now records with torn labels which have been chewed up by an errant sound-box or heavy electrical pick-up can often be seen. One way of stopping this problem was to devise some method of stopping the machine when it reached the end of a record. Early German Gramophone Co. records (G&T) often have run-out grooves crossing the blank

area between the recorded grooves and the label. Unfortunately as yet there was no centre groove, and as the run-out groove always traversed the blank area in half a revolution, no matter how large the blank area was, the risk of accidents actually increased with this system. Did the gramophones of this time have some kind of automatic braking system triggered by these run-out grooves? If so I do not know of any. The next solution was to put a protecting ridge around the label so that a heavy sound-box of the time would not cross over to the label area. Later a double ridge was used (for greater protection?). These ridges were used on English pressings too, but we never had run-out grooves at this stage. However what we **did** do was to have a concentric groove right after the playing grooves had finished, so that the needle would be trapped in this until it was lifted out, or the gramophone motor wound down. Victor in America used this system, and indeed right up to the end of the era of acoustic recording this was the method used in all HMV and Victor records. Zonophone records, although manufactured by the Gramophone Company from early on, had one basic difference from their more expensive counterparts - in the blank area at the edge of the record a concentric ridge was placed a short way from the edge, so that, in theory, the needle could not accidentally slide off the record edge. G&T pressings of this time actually had a raised outer edge with a drop into the playing grooves, which often meant the sound-box falling into the first few grooves on a record and damaging them, so very many records of this type have rough starts. Surprisingly, this method was used until after double-sided records came in. These early 'B' and 'C' series records are curious, with one flush side and the other side with raised edge. Some 'D' series were issued in this way, so raised edges were issued as late as 1918.

Polydor then decided that the whole business of



conveying the pick-up to the centre of the record away from the playing grooves and keeping it there could best be done with grooves, not ridges. So from around the time of the first World War until around the late 1920s Polydor records would have a centre groove close to the label. This concentric groove would be joined to the playing grooves by a groove which traversed the distance in half a revolution. On a short side this meant that the run-out groove would be at such an angle to the grooves that no pick-up, ancient or modern, could possibly travel across it. But at least when the automatic braking systems came in this run-out would certainly stop the machine.

Vocalion used a system similar to HMV but with the addition of a second concentric groove between the playing grooves and the label - if the first centre groove did not hold, the second one surely would!

Manufacturers were now trying to make machines that would stop at the end of a side so that the unattended machine would not go on playing the label until someone came to the rescue the unfortunate record. Also the first automatic gramophones were starting to appear, so some means of operating these systems with the records had to be devised. HMV devised a braking system that would operate if the tone-arm was pulled back towards the edge of the record. They achieved this by making the centre groove eccentric, so that at the end of the record the arm would move back and forward until the braking system on the machine came into operation; and just to make sure a second eccentric groove was inscribed close to the eccentric centre groove. The outer groove almost touched the final playing groove at its nearest point, so that only an extremely short link was needed. These records with their double eccentric grooves lasted from 1925 to around 1932, the year after the formation of E.M.I. Ltd. Victor records also used this method, and older records had these new run-out grooves added (although many examples of these only have the double eccentric grooves on one side - why?).

Columbia adopted around 1928, along with a speed of 78rpm, a run-out groove which went slowly across from the playing grooves to a concentric centre groove just outside the label area. Automatic Columbia machines would stop

when the tone-arm reached this far across the record. The run-out grooves on these Columbia records were very like those on a modern Long Playing record. This idea was not new - Brunswick and Vocalion had been making records with run-out grooves of this type since the final days of acoustic recording.

When Decca records were introduced in the late 1920s they also used a version of this Columbia system, but like Vocalion and Brunswick, their run-out groove crossed over to the concentric centre groove quite slowly, and although Decca used mainly 3" labels, the centre groove was a good distance from the label except on very long sides. Vocalion were to use this system on their Broadcast records.

Edison Bell had been using a system with no run-out groove, but only a concentric groove attached to the final playing groove. They kept this system until around 1928, when they too adopted a version of the Columbia system.

With the formation of E.M.I. Ltd. both Columbia and HMV changed to a 3" label, and now had a run-out groove leading to one eccentric centre groove which almost touched the label at its nearest point. They were to use this method right up to the end of the 78 era. Victor used a similar system but with a double eccentric centre groove for two or three years before they too adopted the E.M.I. method. American Columbia later adopted a double eccentric centre groove (very badly made and very noisy) before eventually going back to the E.M.I. method in the 1950s.

Decca by the 1930s had also adopted the single eccentric centre groove, but had their own individual way of reaching it - the whole run-out groove was also eccentric, giving an automatic mechanism a multiple choice of when to stop! M-G-M and Capitol in the 1950s were also to use this method. Later Decca decided to combine both methods, so that the run-out grooves started off normally, and became eccentric just before joining the centre groove. It is at this moment we hear the characteristic "wheeee!" which makes Decca run-outs so distinctive at this time. Decca were also experimenting with variable pitch playing grooves at this time, but that is another story!



Around 1937 run-in grooves began to appear. Before this the pick-up was lowered onto the blank rim and pushed into the first playing groove, or on automatic machines. Frictional drag would pull the needle into the first groove (or further if unlucky) but with lighter playing weights a means of guiding the needle into the music was necessary.

So the run-in groove was born. Actually Pathé had tried something on their hill-and-dale discs many years before, but their run-in groove was added after the record had been made, and was not very successful. But the new method worked well and soon everyone was making records with run-in grooves. Private recordings or very limited runs were now the only records made with concentric centre grooves, and some of these also had no run-in grooves. (I am thinking here of various Mood Music labels especially.) In the 1940s Decca experimented with very slow run-in grooves, but this had the effect of having to wait longer for the music to start.

45rpm records were made from the outset with concentric centre grooves, but many LPs had eccentric centre grooves (Oriole even still used double eccentric centre grooves) until the early 1960s when all records were made with concen-

tric centre grooves very like those Columbia had made in the late 1920s!

This is only a brief outline, and without illustrations (which would simply take up too much space). I hope the reader will have been able to follow my descriptions.

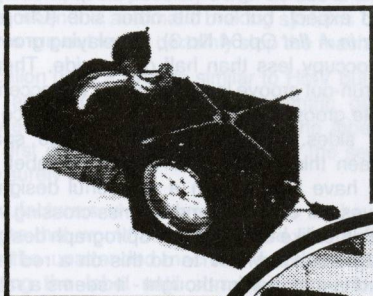
To end with I must mention a most unusual record - HMV DB 931. On one side we have Vladimir de Pachmann playing Chopin's *Polo-naise* Op.26 No.1. The conventional double eccentric centre groove is there just as you would expect, but on the other side (Chopin's *Waltz in A flat* Op.64 No.3), the playing grooves only occupy less than half of the side. Then a long run-out groove leads across to the eccentric double grooves - this was common practice on short sides. But there is still a large space between this centre groove and the label, so HMV have filled it with a wonderful design of grooves, all eccentric and all criss-crossing with each other like one of those Spirograph designs. What persuaded HMV to do this on a red label record is a matter for thought - it seems a rather frivolous thing to have done. I have found no other examples, but if anyone out there has or knows of one, I would be most interested to hear from them.



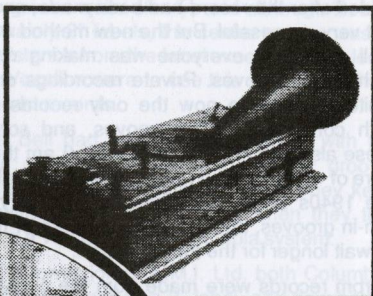
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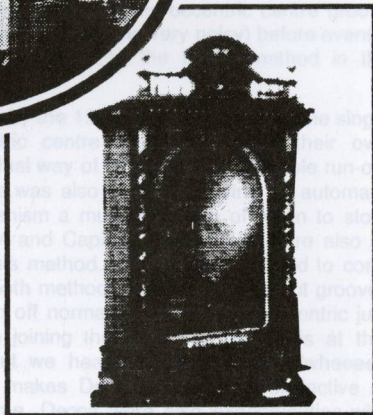
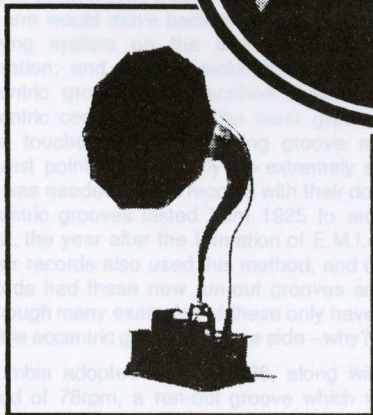


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# TECHNICAL JOTTINGS

## 2: Edison Bell Winner 4554

### by Adrian Tuddenham

In *Hillandale News* 198 p.67, George Frow wrote about Edison Bell Winner 4554 and speculated on how it might have been synchronised with a film. I do not think this could have been the case. It seems much more likely that community singing was recorded onto this disc whilst the Pathé film was being shown. Could it be that the *Song Film* comprised silent pictures of a stirring patriotic nature with, perhaps, words of a suitable song superimposed on the picture so as to encourage the audience to sing? The 'synchronisation' was the audience keeping time with the film.

This recording is a most historical document as it brings to light two further technical points which I don't think have been published before.

The first, which was pointed out to me by Peter Copeland, is that the music is arranged in two convenient length sections which nicely fit each side of the record; the performance being organised for recording rather than being an actuality recording of an independently organised event. Each side begins with a drum roll which was probably the cue to the recording engineer, miles away in the Peckham factory, to lower the cutter-head and begin recording. This drum roll appears unnecessarily prolonged at the start of side two. Unnecessary, that is, until you enquire whether they had two machines so as to be able to record continuously; if they did not, then a means of covering up the pause while a fresh wax was loaded onto the turntable would be needed.....the drum roll! If further evidence were needed, the haste with which the recording engineer terminated side one and the fact that both sides begin with the cutter-head 'live' (no time to be bothered with sophisticated fade-ins) suggests they were working under pressure.

The second secret locked up in the grooves of this record only became apparent when the sound was processed to remove the surface noise. Hidden below the scratch (but possibly audible on a mint condition copy) there is a

continuous background of low frequency muffled splutters (like a distant lawn-mower engine) which is very obviously not any kind of surface noise. Whilst some of this could conceivably have been picked up by the telephone lines from the electric tramways which ran alongside the routes between Lewisham and Peckham, it sounds to me to have come from a very different source, especially as it changes character when the first loud note is sung on side 1.

P. G. A. H. Voigt invented and used the Slack Diaphragm Condenser Microphone which involved applying high voltages between two metal sheets in close proximity. On a November day, when this event took place, the effect of an audience of 2,000 would have been to raise the humidity in the cinema to a point where the insulation between the plates could start to break down, giving characteristic spluttering noises.

Here, I believe, we have the recorded evidence of the problems which beset this particular type of microphone and led to its eventual rejection by the BBC.<sup>1</sup> A similar microphone was later brought to perfection by the German broadcasting authorities using improved insulating materials which had been unavailable to Voigt. (Remember Edison Bell manufactured wireless insulators themselves and Voigt would probably have been obliged to use their material whether he wanted to or not).

Thank you George Frow for reminding me of one more example of this brilliant inventor, ahead of his time.

#### Reference:

- <sup>1</sup> Pawley, E. *BBC Engineering 1922 - 1972* p.119



## MUSICAL CIRCLES

### The Evolution of Talking Machine Societies in Great Britain

by George Frow

The story of our society has been told in several numbers of *Hillandale News* over its years, sometimes from recollections in earlier times and sometimes in detail from the pages from *The Sound Wave* or *Talking Machine News* where reports of early societies were printed. Now that our journal has arrived at another milestone perhaps it is timely to stitch together the early threads of the society movement for today's reader as well as providing grist for the future researcher. It does not seem likely that the story can ever be published *in toto* (it would make tedious reading) but an account of the years up to the 1911 genesis of these societies will give credit to those who worked towards the movement.

During the 14 years of the century leading to the Great War the British talking machine trade and following were dominated by minor personalities, several even who had been engaged in the business before then. One such was J. Lewis Young who worked under Colonel Gouraud as manager of the Edison Phonograph Company, remaining in harness until the 1920s when he addressed a meeting of our society. Adrian F. Sykes was a frequent contributor to the letter columns of the talking machine journals where his attachment to things Edison brought him into almost continual conflict with Henry Seymour in 'Letters to the Editor' and on public platforms. He also took his Edison Phonograph round and gave public demonstrations and later made his own moulded cylinders. Seymour was a manufacturer of gramophones and developed accessories for both disc and cylinder machines and was a champion of the floating cylinder reproducer, whereas Sykes backed the Edison types. Another in the industry since the early days was James E. Hough; he was not shy when self-publicity was called for, though he preferred encouragement rather than getting involved in early society gatherings and was strategically generous with Edison Bell records.

Other correspondents of the times were Lonzev A. Willcox of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and R. P. Wykes who owned a phonograph shop in Northampton. There were London laymen of the day like R. H. Clarke and C. R. W. Miles who became prominent in the societies when they were formed.

The golden rule of any story is to 'start' at the beginning', but one seeks a defined starting line in vain and in the absence of any reports of meetings overseas in the first years of the century it can only be assumed that much of the impetus for starting the movement must have emanated from the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

In the search for 'togetherness' that might indicate the beginnings of society assemblies, accounts may be found of the early Edison electric phonograph in the United States being set up to provide music, prayers and a sermon in churches and chapels in isolated communities, but mechanical difficulties and the impersonality of it all led to such services being short-lived and a mixed chapel congregation of the day had little in common towards forming a mechanical music society. The idea must have travelled eastwards because by 1904 an advertisement appeared in *The Barrow-in-Furness News* asking for a preaching phonograph for Sparkhill Wesleyan Chapel with a speaking power for 40,000 cubic feet. There were apparently people available with apparatus and records for hire for such circumstances, and this was by no means an isolated announcement of such a business being in existence.

Talking machine owners in Queen Victoria's final decade were encouraged by manufacturers to visit the houses of friends, taking their mechanical music with them and this is supported by the variety of instrument and record cases, horn containers and the like, then available. In the days before mechanical copyright, public performances too were encouraged by the machine and record companies; often their managerial staff would make the journey and give the entertainment. Such recitals were usually made an 'occasion' with a small admittance charge and printed programme, but no evidence has been found of any society or musical circle resulting. Dealers too gave public performances in halls as did private owners at parties and dances and in hospitals and homes for invalids and the aged.

A letter in *Talking Machine News* of 1912 recounted that talking machine and record sales had been mostly in the hands of music dealers before about 1899 when the writer doubted there was a single



# THE SOUTH LONDON Phonograph and Gramophone Society,

(Affiliated to the North London and West London Societies).

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cycle dealer trading in them anywhere. The music dealer awaited a customer, then ordered a dozen records on approval; this was not the sort of shop relationship that would mature. According to the editorial policy of *The Edison Phonograph Monthly*, put out for the American trade from 1903, the onus lay with the retailer to open up after hours for recitals. Salons were depicted, but nowhere were any societies or clubs realised. The Edison company would have leapt to publicise this form of 'hustling'.

*Talking Machine News* recommended its readers to Phonograph Parties and offered to demonstrate "pleasant evenings spent in making records of your own voice or voices of your family and friends". Arriving guests would be asked to guess the owners of the voices on the cylinders. Around 1909 when Auxeto-Gramophone and Pathé Majestic Grand Concert programmes were listed in public places about the country and in London parks in the summer months, similar audiences at Bristol and Bath were estimated at 1,000 to 1,500. If such occasions were extended privately afterwards, there is no evidence of them taking roots.

An unexpected form of record club was floated in 1909 when Stanley Hassan, a reader of *The Sound Wave* proposed one for the purpose of exchanging Pathé and other forms of phono-disc, but within the boundaries of London owners only. He envisaged 20 members at a meeting, each of whom would contribute 20 records and then carry on giving a certain number of records yearly to the club at, say one or two a month. An agreed number of records would be allowed each member weekly or fortnightly, perhaps 6 double-sided ones, and concerts could take place periodically. Even the least cynical would say that the proposer of such an idea had stood himself in the middle of a minefield. In fact the outcome of the letter is not known, but his was the most progressive suggestion of several in the year and the only one offering prospects of getting together to listen to records. Nonetheless a vigorous but short-lived custom of record exchanging among individuals all over the country came into being soon after, participants wants and offers being given a special column in the two main journals.

It is known too that a society was hatched in one of the Northern counties at this time but it was shy of publicity as neither a date nor location has been seen in the journals. Frank Andrews reminds us that at least one large commercial concern was operating an early phonograph and gramophone club about this date. This was The Prudential Assurance Co. Ltd. and was mentioned in a casual remark by Major Gerry Annand, a late president of the society, who worked for the 'Pru'.

Among the main companies going round and giving demonstrations to the public were Pathé Frères and Zonophone, while private individuals gave Edison and Graphophone/Grafonola concerts. Later, Edison Bell and The National Gramophone Co. Ltd. (Marathon) would participate and there were reports of Phonographs vs. Gramophone concerts, but as yet no real signs of groups coalescing. There was not a lot of musical weight outside the dearer HMV and Columbia labels and most of the concerts comprised marches, ballads, hymns, comedy sketches and descriptive pieces, but this was the musical taste of the talking machine laity of the time and the sort of audience for a Mozart overture or a Beethoven symphony movement would have to wait until 1913.

In February 1911 there appeared a letter in *The Sound Wave* that opened the door to the eventual setting-up of the talking machine society movement, one that is still much alive in the modern world as recorded music societies. The letter writer first makes reference to that unknown society in the Northern counties, then continues:

"I am wondering why not a similar society in London? There must be a good few phono-lovers among your readers who would like to become members of a talking machine society. I would be pleased to help form one and would readily undertake the secretarial work to commence. [sic] If any 'Sound Waver' writes to me at the address below, I shall be glad to reply with all particulars. Now, Mr Editor if you will kindly publish this letter, at the same time letting me know what you think of this idea I think London will not be left much longer without a talking machine society."

L. V. Songest, 157 The Broadway,  
Cricklewood N. W.

The rallying call had been made but the next *Sound Wave* offered only silence in its columns - perhaps most interested people were posting their letters in Songest's direction - and this seeming lack of support was noticed by A. Gunter of Aldgate, London in April:

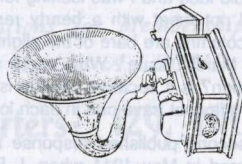
"In the February issue of your bright little journal there was a letter from L. V. Songest advocating the formation of a talking machine society. It is a splendid idea and I was looking forward to seeing if it would not meet with a hearty response. [sic] Alas, your columns are bare of the slightest allusion to it in your March issue. Why such a seemingly cold reception? Is it because London is too big for such a club? Why not have one in each locality? etc. etc."

The second published response to Songest's letter appeared in May 1911 when J. Burbanks of Derby used it to ask for support for a society there, but the letter was ill-framed and died the death.



The oldest London Phonograph & Gramophone Society.

89 HIGH ROAD, CHISWICK, W.



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 Secretary and Treasurer: Mr. W. J. WALLACE HAMILL

8 HARLEY ROAD,  
 WILLESDEN JUNCTION,  
 London, W. 4

London, October 26, 1913

W. J.

Thomas Alva Edison Esq.  
 The Laboratory.

Orange N.J. U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Edison, I am obliged by your favour of August 25th which has at last reached me.

Needless to say we are deeply indebted to you for the great honour you have bestowed upon this organization by associating yourself with it - an interest which is shared by your British staff, from Mr. Comelin downwards.

Incidentally you will accept these few lines, as an appreciation of our thanks for your very early.

W. J. Wallace Hamill

A letter to Edison from the  
 West London Phonograph and Gramophone Society

NORTH LONDON  
 PHONOGRAPH AND GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY.

JOHN BARNES,  
 Hon. Sec.

12, TORRIANO AVENUE,  
 CAMDEN ROAD, N.W.

LONDON, December 1914

Dear Sir,

As you are no doubt aware, we have demonstrated some of your Discs on two occasions here, and have collected a fairly consistent in the Old Country, what is now awaiting them, and I am aware you the market is ready.

Could you spare us with some for demonstrating?

Waiting for the complements of the season, and better luck in future.

I remain

Yours faithfully

John Barnes

T.A. Edison Esq.

P.S. May I put you down as Vice-President for our Society? E.

A letter to Edison from the  
 North London Phonograph and Gramophone Society



Songest came back into print in the June issue when he gave notice that following readers' support he was making arrangements to hold a preliminary meeting and that all wishing to attend should apply to him for particulars. This brought the first coming-together of The North West London Phonograph & Gramophone Society at his home at 157 Broadway, Cricklewood on June 29th 1911. The attendance was reported as good and Adrian F. Sykes took the chair. The evening's business consisted mainly of forming the rules, and future monthly meetings were decided on, at a starting time of 8pm.

The next meeting reported was probably on October 5th 1911 (there is no month indicated), when future policy was discussed. There were differences in the ranks where some members favoured the Society offering facilities for the cheap purchase of records. In spite of the lure of discounts the Chairman, Adrian Sykes, pointed out that this was not the Society's original intentions and it owed no allegiance to anybody financially or morally, but it was a matter for members to decide. L. V. Songest put forward a motion disapproving, supported by F. Wallace, and in time the dissentients came round to this advice and the motion was carried with none against.

The West London Phonograph & Gramophone Society first convened on September 21st 1911 at W. J. Wallace Hamill's home, 41 Westcroft Square, Ravenscourt Park, West London. Hamill, a local dealer, had particularly asked enthusiasts resident in Hammer-smith, Fulham, Chiswick, Shepherd's Bush, Notting Hill, Paddington and district to come along. Present were Adrian Sykes, L. V. Songest and Hamill, who had been appointed Honorary Secretary.

The North London Phonograph & Gramophone Society was a little later with its inaugural meeting at F. Wallace's home, 74 Drayton Park, Highbury N. on Saturday December 9th 1911, when C. R. W. Miles took the chair. It was hoped that this society, together with the two already operating, the West and the North London, would form branches of a single organisation.<sup>2</sup> Adrian Sykes announced that he would act as Secretary of North London until someone else was elected. He also made the point that Gramophone, Edison or Pathéphone users were equally welcome to come along.

The next London group to form was The South London Phonograph & Gramophone Society, following a letter from J. J. Witham of 20 Blackshaw Road, Tooting, S. W. in October 1912 on the desirability of such a society locally, and supported by C. A. Bond, a Tooting dealer and prominent figure in the trade. The inaugural meeting took place on November 18th

1912 at Blackshaw road, Bond became chairman and the Society joined the Association.

The original North West London Society had a meeting recorded in December 1911, then disappeared from reports and reference and was not re-formed until December 6th 1920 by W. F. Franklin. The reasons for its dissolution have not been found.

Not surprisingly members of the early societies had an attitude somewhat different to our own today, but ours had a long time to evolve. Their aim was to hear records sounding well on instruments with the latest sound-boxes and horns, the content often taking second place. Therefore there were endless competitions for the best sound-boxes and diaphragms, often with small money prizes or records. Frequently members brought along their machines. There were cylinders to hear as well as discs and in the 'best record' competitions Amberol and Blue Amberol cylinders usually took top prizes, certainly up to the end of 1914 when Edison cylinder production methods changed.

A burdensome practice usual in those early days was the holding of formal business at the start of every meeting with Minutes being read and approved. At the end of the presentation, convention usually ordained a vote of thanks, then a seconder, with a reply from the speaker and additional thanks for hospitality from visitors. Every record played would be applauded, a practice that continued into the 1960s in our Society. Usually the evening closed with a record of the national Anthem. Programmes started at 7-30 or 8pm and with a break for refreshment went on to 11pm or sometimes past 11-30 in those days of late public transport. There were sometimes two different programmes in an evening with often a contest for machines or records but these became shorter when blackouts started following the Zeppelin raids. Competitiveness was very much part of the collecting scene and a long time passed before the faithful would gather to enjoy the music rather than make the recorded quality comparisons with differences over sound-box construction or the ideal diaphragm material.

Some audiences too were more outspoken than would be expected today, even to the point of shabby manners when items fell below approval, and comments would be reported as 'trenchant'. As time passed reports of meetings improved as the secretaries gained experience and the societies matured. Some of their enterprises ventured outside recorded music from the start, and whist drives, dances, picnics and charabanc outings were held. There were evening visits to local cinemas *en masse* and day



visits to disc pressing at Edison Bell or Marathon, or to the cylinder studios of Edison. Northampton had a cycling club. Several had talented members who were prepared to play, sing or perform on special evenings, and several recording artistes became attending members.

From their letters of proposal in the journals these early societies used 'Talking Machine' to describe themselves, on convention they became either Phonograph or Gramophone or Gramophone & Phonograph societies according to the leanings of the majority, and by the time Edison's cylinders and machines had ceased to come over in 1916 most had shed the Phonograph. Manchester had both a Gramophone and a Phonograph Society (Manchester Edison Society, formed by members of the Salford Society), and this survived until after the founding of the London Edison Society (this society) in May 1919.

The War had been over for some weeks and with the prospect of fresh stocks of Edison machines, cylinders and discs coming over, there was a movements of members in February 1919 from the North London Society where cylinders as well as gramophone records were still played. These were Norman F. Hillyer, North London's president, J. W. Crawley,<sup>3</sup> its chairman and C. R. W. Miles, a hard worker in

London societies and earlier the London representative to the Northants society. They called for a new society that would be exclusively cylinder - playing.

The correspondence that led to the founding of this Society was given in the Diamond Jubilee issue (No. 107) of *Hillandale News* in April 1979.

#### Notes:

- 1) Only in the month of August 1914 when the War broke out did a letter appear from an Australian engineer for advice on starting a society there.
- 2) The three London societies agreed at a meeting on March 15th 1913 at Tooting Junction, South London, to affiliate formally, a conjunction that helped London members to visit other societies than their own; membership cards were amended to admit holders to all three. There was a February 1913 visit to the Edison Works in London by Combined Talking Instrument Societies, but there was no other sign of similar federation outside London.
- 3) Crawley was the Edison supporter who after 1914 had criticised the dubbed Blue Amberols as 'Damberols'.

### Careers of the earliest-known British talking machine societies from 1911 to 1918

Society	Instituted	Ceased to function
North West London	June 29th 1911	? 1912
West London	Sept. 21st 1911	after June 1915
North London	Dec. 9th 1911	*
Northants	March 20th 1912	after March 1915
Wolverhampton	? Sept. 1912	after Dec. 1914
Sheffield	Sept. 14th 1912	*
South London	Nov. 18th 1912	*
Tyneside	Nov. 1912	inactive from May 1915 to early 1919
Liverpool & District	Jan. 27th 1913	*
Salford	Feb. 12th 1913	during 1914-18 War
Handsworth	July 2nd 1913	after Dec. 1913
Woodford	Oct. 2nd 1913	after June 1914
Manchester Talking Machine	Dec. 19th 1913	*
Chiswick	March 1914	probably 1915
Bradford	c. May 1914	*
Manchester Edison	Nov. 16th 1914	*
East London	April 1918	*

The actual dates when these societies ceased to hold meetings are naturally vague, as no society announced its closure but ceased to send in reports to the journals when its attendance was depleted by war duties.

\* functioned after 1918



**R. P. WYKES,**  
**EDISON "EXCLUSIVE"**

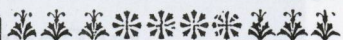
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Thomas A. Edison's membership card for the Northants. Talking Machine Society (outside)



NORTHANTS.

**Talking .**  
**Machine.**  
**Society .**

1929

HEAD QUARTERS:

ARCADE EMPORIUM.



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No. 1.....

*Patron*

Name.....

*Thos A Edison Esq*  
*The Laboratory*

Address.....

*Orange*  
*New Jersey*  
*U. S. A. -*

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*Vice-Presidents :*

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*Committee :*

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A. M. Garner, J. Powell, H. Ruff,  
A. W. Sims.

*Hon. Correspondent :* Mr. C. R. W. Miles.

*Hon. Secretary :* F. W. Middleton.

*Assistant Hon. Secretary :* R. P. Wykes.

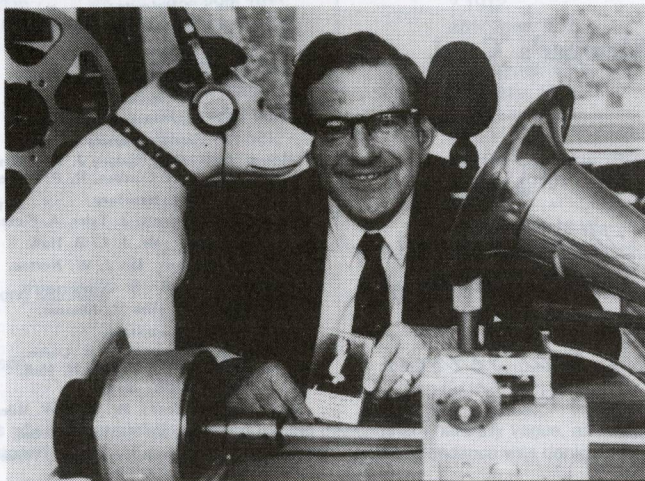
Thomas A. Edison's membership card for the Northants. Talking Machine Society (inside)



## JOE PENGELLY'S CYLINDER PLAYER

### by Chris Hamilton

Joe Pengelly will be talking about his latest cylinder player (Mark 3 version) and playing recordings made using it at the Society's London Meeting on 17th November 1994. I think this is an appropriate moment to give a brief description of the device. Joe has for many years been involved in developing modern machines to play cylinders. In conjunction with Mike Stringer, of Plymouth University, Joe has produced the Mark 3 version of his player. Unlike some of his colleagues in this field Joe does not use a parallel tracking arm. He utilises a free-floating stylus, whose cartridge is fixed to a SME type head-shell. Two DC printed armature motors with integral tacho generators provide drive, enabling the speed of each motor to be derived by feedback from the tacho. A 5:1 reduction gear box transmits power to the mandrel. The speed range is from zero to 235rpm. The mandrel carries the cylinder in a transverse motion. This is driven through a 3:1 reduction gearing. The speed of the mandrel is adjustable between 0.1" to 3.6" per minute. This machine can play all known sizes of cylinders. One unusual feature of the design is the ability of the motors (both feed and rotational) to be reversed to allow transcription from end to beginning. This means that the stylus can track relatively unworn parts of the groove and give a better reproduction when the tape playback direction is reversed. I have not heard any transcription done with this machine but those who have heard some have assured me that they have never heard cylinders sound so well. I urge those interested to make the journey to the National Sound Archive on November 17th 1994 to experience for themselves the excellent quality of cylinder transfers and learn all about this new cylinder player in greater detail.

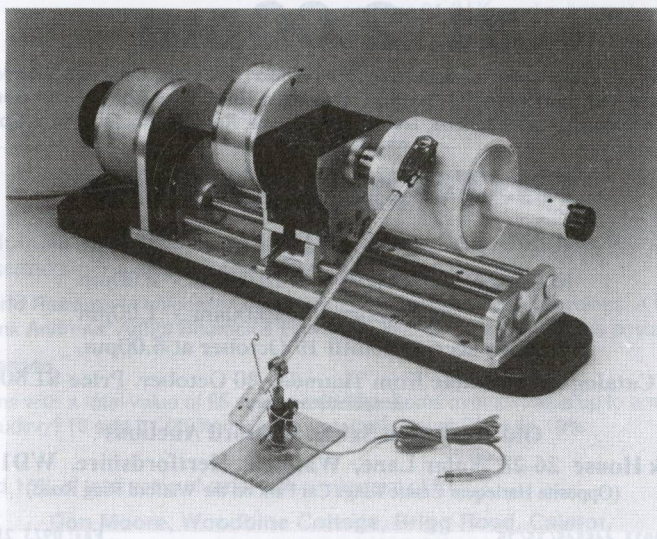


Joe Pengelly with one of his earlier cylinder players





A selection of the different sizes of cylinders and mandrels used by Joe



Joe's Mark 3 cylinder player



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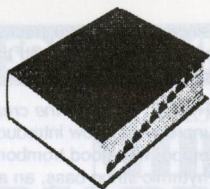
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## REVIEWS



### The Columbia 1904-1905 Cylinder and Disc Records Catalogue revisited

When looking for some Columbia disc and cylinder information of the turn of the century, I was struck by how useful a reprint this catalogue is and what good value for a booklet of its size. Right through, where both disc and XP cylinders are listed, they are given equal treatment, with numbers side-by-side.

In between the *Grand Opera* records of Sembrich, E de Reske, Schumann-Heink, Adams, Scotti, Gilibert at the front, and the foreign section at the end, there is an abundance of vocal and instrumental musical selections for the Graphophone owner of the day. Some may still be found in some collections and occasionally heard on Society evenings.

Recordings were made by the leading British and American bands and by prominent British and US Music Hall and Vaudeville performers of the day from W. H. Berry to Uncle Josh Weatherby. These were the days when this branch of the stage was enjoying its peak.

If some of the vocalists are forgotten today their photographs are there, the men with full moustaches and centre parting, and high or wing collars in the fashion, the ladies with swept-up hair and ostrich-plumed hats, the height of Edwardian style; so were the pince-nez spectacles.

*Three Little Sermons* were obviously in demand, those obliging being the Revs. Meyer of Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, where Columbia recorded Clara Butt, and Campbell of the City Temple, Holborn. This was probably the first church lit by (Edison) electric light.

There are about a dozen listings of foreign items.

If this catalogue has passed you by and your interests are for this age and the performers then around, then this catalogue (104pp. soft cover, 8¼" x 5½") will fully meet your expectations. It is available from the **Society's Booklist** c/o Don Moore, [redacted] Caistor, Lincolnshire LN7 6RX. Price **£5.50** plus postage **£1** (U.K. and overseas).

**George Frow**

## C.L.P.G.S. BOOKLIST

- CL 24 **Columbia 1904-1905 Catalogue** - Cylinders & Discs. 104 page listing as described in the above review. Price **£5.50** plus postage.
- BD 04 **World Records** plus Vocalion W, Fetherflex & Penny Phono Recordings. A listing by Frank Andrews, Arthur Badrock & Edward S. Walker. Price **£4.00** plus postage.

### Postal Charges

U.K. Items with a total value of £5 or less **add 50p**. Items over £5 value up to and including £10 **add £1.00**. Items with a total value over £10 **add 10%**

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**Don Moore, [redacted] Caistor,  
Lincolnshire LN7 6RX**



## REVIEWS



### The California Ramblers - Edison Laterals 2

Diamond Cut Productions (not "Needle Cut Productions"?), in association with the Smithsonian Institution Press, have produced a second CD of rare Edison lateral-cut recordings from 1928 and 1929. While most of the items were issued in Diamond Disc, lateral disc or cylinder form, four of them have never been issued before.

This CD is wholly of the excellent and jazz-influenced dance band the California Ramblers, known on Edison as the Golden Gate Orchestra (and the McAlpineers). They recorded for many labels under various names, so were not exclusive to Edison - though the company had to buy out the contract when recording ceased in October 1929.

The band was directed by non-instrumentalist Ed Kirkeby, who was keen on hot music and brought in such jazz stars as Adrian Rollini, Chelsea Quealey, Sylvester Ahola and the Dorsey brothers. Kirkeby was born in 1891, took over the Ramblers from 1921 to 1936, and was still active in the music business in the 1970s. Recording began in 1921 (Vocalion), then the band made many Pathé Actuelles, and started at Edison in 1924. There they made one of the first electrics (July 1927) but their first needle-cut was not made until July 1928 (although the process had been available since February).

The presentation of the CD is good. The tracks are, importantly, in chronological order. The reproduction of the Edison needle-cut label is almost exact. This has knowledgeable and intellectual notes by accomplished trumpeter Richard Sudhalter. There are full personnel and discographical notes, and a clear 1929 photograph of the band.

As to sound quality, these Edison laterals have amazing fidelity, though the originals were pressed in a somewhat gritty material. Diamond Cut have eliminated much of the surface noise with their "DCart" process, and there is **no added echo**. Theodore Edison and Walter Miller would have approved this development of their process, I am sure. There is plenty of bass (rather lacking with the electric Diamond Discs), but the balance is fine.

Since there are 20 tracks, I can only highlight those of special note, though the musicianship is of a high standard throughout.

Track 2: *You're the cream in my coffee*. A most unpromising slow introduction leads into a brisk tempo, with good trombone and clarinet. There is a rhythmic string bass, an advanced feature for 1928 when brass basses (ploddy!) were usual.

Track 4: *Button up your overcoat*. Always a good test for a band, this number, and the Ramblers sail through. Precision section work, bright trombone (Miff Mole), clarinet and violin soli raise this to my second favourite on this album. Vocal is by Edison regular J. Donald Parker. This item was issued on Diamond Disc, Blue Amberol and needle-cut disc.

Track 5: *Guess who?* Thumpy bass, strange orchestration in a bluesy style.

Track 7: *Sunrise to Sunset*. This is taken at a gallop, and there had been many personnel changes in the band, which had a fuller sound from this point.

Track 10: *Broadway Baby Dolls*. Swingy, precision ensemble work. Good clarinet.

Track 16: *Counting the stars alone*. On this tuneful number, the "unknown" vocalist is once again, Ed Kirkeby.

Track 17: *Pretty little you*. Ah! some piano - little heard on other tracks - and smooth alto sax.

Track 19: *Lady Luck*. This matrix was assigned to catalogue number 14083, which was never issued; I am so glad that we can now hear it, as it is the most astounding number of this collection. The band has a much more modern sound which reminded me at once of Jack Jackson's Dorchester band of the mid 1930s. It has a rhythmic beat, warm rich sound and tight precision. There are strings too; this is a winner all round.

Track 20: *I'm a dreamer*. This has some subtone clarinet, and a trombone solo by a musician who later became quite well known - Glenn Miller. Now if Edison's had not stopped recording ten days later and kept Glenn Miller on.....

This album is essential listening for lovers of hot dance music, and is also of great historical interest to Ediphiles and is available in the UK from the **Society's Booklist** from 1st November priced **£13** plus **£1.30** postage (U.K.) and **£1.95** (overseas). It is available in the USA direct from **Diamond Cut Productions**, PO Box 305, Hibernia, NJ 07842-0305 priced at **\$17.98** plus **\$4.00** post and packaging.

**Paul Collenette**



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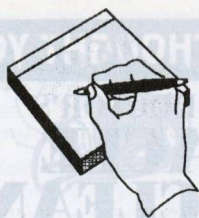
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## LETTERS



### Cleaning 78rpm records

Dear Chris,

In the letters column in *Hillandale News* 199, August 1994, I noticed that Ian Calderwood made reference to WD40 as a useful cleaning agent for use on 78rpm records. I would agree that this fluid does miracles with most things i.e., sticky locks, seized-up stopcocks, stubborn metal hinges, *et al.*, but I would think twice before using it on 78s. In the short term WD40 may well rid the grooves of gunge collected over the years and give an acceptable shine to the record surface but, in the long term, it could well cause problems with the shellac and base properties used in the make-up and manufacture of a 78rpm disc. As to what effect it has on the latter-day vinyl 78 is anybody's guess. Submerging 78s into a bowl of luke-warm water using a touch of washing-up liquid and 'washing' them was one way of cleaning them, I believe, in past years. I have always been opposed to this method as water (unless completely removed from the base of the grooves) will, in the long term, prove damaging. Products such as 'Beautytone' may have solved the problem on old 78s in the past - especially those where the grooves were churned up by worn needles or pick-ups weighing a ton! Anyway, like WD40, I could never come to terms with the awful smell of that product.

For some 30 or more years now I have found liquid plastic polish a most suitable agent for removing groove gunge and putting a shine on the record surface. Using a damp cloth (J cloth, or the like) with a sprinkle of plastic polish and good circular rubbing to both sides of a 78, it does the purpose to both shellac and vinyl 78s. They not only look good but play good, and that applies to records I first treated all those years ago. The odour that the polish emits is quite pleasant to me. In fact, I really believe if used to extremes, one could get 'hooked' on it! I hasten to add that one cannot (as far as I know) purchase this product over the counter. Years ago it was manufactured by Goddards and then taken over by Greycote Chemical Products Ltd. It is an industrial product but can be purchased from the manufacturers in limited quantities, i.e., a carton of 10 bottles, each bottle containing approx. 3½ fluid ounces. The main use of the polish is for cleaning perspex but also used for

cleaning bakelite (telephones, etc.), plastic shells (telephone cases, etc.) and, well recommended in the cleaning of vinylite (LPs, EPs and the like).

Yours sincerely,

Frank Hurlock, Southsea, Hants.

### *Don Quichotte*, film by G. W. Pabst

Dear Chris,

It may interest your readership to know that a splendid video issue of both the English-language and French-language of *Don Quichotte*, the former with George Robey as Sancho Panza, the latter with Dorville, both with Chaliapin of course, has been issued by Eclipse Records Ltd., as distributed by Video Artist International (VAI). The telephone number for information and ordering in the UK is 0800-89-2931. I assume that the film is available in all three standards (NTSC, PAL and SECAM).

Both versions are included on a single two-hour tape and I can assure readers that the quality is splendid, in sound and picture. I'm happiest to report that the prints used for the transfer, as acknowledged, were furnished by the British National Film Archives, to which all of us should be grateful.

American readers might like to know that they can order the video direct from VAI tel: 1-800-477-7146.

Yours sincerely,

William Shaman, Bemidji, Minnesota, USA

### Earliest born person to record?

Dear Editor,

Here's the one to beat. In the Hungarian National Library is a cylinder from Lajos Kosuth (1802-1894). Kosuth is one of the most famous and revered people in Hungarian history, having led the struggle against the Habsburgs for Hungary's freedom.

Sincerely,

Mike Moran, Basel, Switzerland

### Comments on Technical Jottings 1

Dear Mr Hamilton,

It is always nice to read technical articles in *Hillandale News*. I refer readers to *Technical Jottings 1* by Denis Harbour, the second column on page 95 in the last issue. Here Denis writes "...the dynamic range non-existent and the modulation low".



I feel this needs some elaboration as I do not entirely agree with these comments. Whenever I go to orchestral concerts I usually take my sound level meter with me. Here are some typical readings: with an 11 piece orchestra (4 accordions, 4 violins, 1 'cello, 1 double bass and grand piano) my meter read 60 dB with one instrument (violin/accordion) playing. With all the instruments playing the meter read 90dB, a difference of 30dB between the softest and loudest sounds. The same readings were obtained with a full symphony orchestra and choir in the Albert Hall, London. Although subjectively the symphony orchestra sounded louder (its dynamic range over 100Hz and 12,000Hz) the sensitivity of the meter was exactly the same as the 11 piece orchestra in the Aldwych Theatre, London, i.e. only 30dB.

Now we come to gramophones and records. (I have ignored frequency response here as I have not yet tested my machines for this). The gramophone is a 1910 Phrynis with compliant diaphragm, thick fibre needles and 3½ foot conical horn with large bell. I list some records with the readings obtained when playing them:

1) Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* - Ballet Suite (an acoustic recording with Eugene Goossens conducting on HMV D 856-8). 1st disc, second side - flute solo 80-90dB with the meter 1 foot from the horn (room size 11' x 14'). Disc 3 second side 98-102dB. Optimistically I'll call this 22dB, only 8dB short of 30dB, but the whole recording was not reproduced at the correct volume level, i.e. 60-90dB.

2) *Moldau* from Smetana's *Ma Vlast* (an early electric recording with the Berlin Statsoper Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech on HMV D 1986/7). First side - flute solo 80-90dB. Side 3 - fortissimo 98-116dB. The total range was 36dB. Again the gramophone was reproducing the music too loudly for the small room.

3) Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* (performed by Ernest Ansermet and L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in a *ffrr* recording on Decca AX328-332). This was played on a modern hi-fi system. Flute solo volume level set so that the meter read 60dB (actually 50-60dB. Fortissimo passages were being reproduced between 80-90dB. With Decca *ffrr* one wonders why early LPs became popular.

I have ignored needle scratch which should be of low intensity 47-54dB (G. A. Briggs *Loudspeakers - The How and Why of Good Reproduction* p.25 [1948]), if your reproducer is set up correctly.

Many gramophones have serious design flaws, but good machines (acoustic and electrical) reproduce an accurate enough facsimile to make listening to recorded music interesting and worthwhile.

On page 93 column 2 Denis writes: "The frequency range was also severely limited...so all sounds except certain solo instruments...gave rise to a sound rather like a parrot squawking in a box." I believe that if one makes the effort one can get quite a lot of detail out of acoustically recorded instrumental discs (depending on the recording engineer), as some recently re-issued material demonstrates.

Anyway it was a good article filled with lots of interesting information.

So dear readers - happy reproductions and experiments!

Yours sincerely,

E. S. C. Nowill, London SW15

## The "Dixie" Home Recorder

Dear Chris,

The enclosed advertisement is taken from *The Model Engineer and Electrician* of April 15th 1920. The "Dixie" home recorder seems to be a 'hill and dale' recorder for disc records, but do any of the readers of *Hillandale News* know if the discs were made of wax?

Yours sincerely,

Rolf Rekdal, Eresfjord, Norway

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## REPORTS



### London Meeting July 21st 1994

Two may be company but there was a crowd of no less than five in the researching and mounting of the programme at the London meeting on July 21st. Frank Andrews told most of the story with George Woolford supplying the records and operating the controller on the gramophone, and Len Watts supplied and showed the slides. Two who had helped to compile the complete catalogue of World records, Arthur Badrock and Edward S. Walker, were not present.

The World Record had appeared in 1922, and with a constant linear groove that started at 33rpm at the edge of the record and finished at 70rpm towards the label, up to around 15 minutes of playing time per side would be achieved. The revolutions of the record were held in check by a controller that ran on the record's surface restraining it, but allowing it to go faster as controller and sound-box moved in towards the label.

It was marketed by Noel Pemberton Billing (1881-1948), an eccentric who could never stand still, being not only a prolific patent holder or applicant for a known 88, but had been a Boer War soldier, a 1913 pilot and founder of the aircraft builders Supermarine in that year, a 1914 Royal Naval Air Service pilot who organised the raid on the German Zeppelin sheds on Lake Constance, Member of Parliament, playwright, long-time litigant in a famous case, and world-wide business man with broadcasting

and recording foundations in Australia, London and California. He was larger than life, with big houses, expensive cars and an enduring ability to raise money and spend it. The World Record catalogue reflected P.B.'s taste for military music and a desire to improve the world.

The following World Long Playing Records were heard:

#### Catalogue No.

- 43 *Faust Selection* Royal Air Force Band
- 205 *Softly Awakes my Heart*  
Dorothy Clark (contralto)
- 133 *Wedding Bells* (10") Grill Room Band
- 109 *The Sheik* Sterling Saxophone Four
- 411 *Quartet No.5 'The Nigger'* by Dvorak  
Leon Abkov Quartet
- 109 *Longing for You*  
Broadway Dance Band
- 205 *Sink, Sink Red Sun and Love's Coronation*  
Margaret Wray (contralto)

The following 1925 Vocalion versions of World Records were also played:

- W 39 *Nutcraker Suite*  
Band of the Welsh Guards
- W 30 *Mikado Selection*  
Band of the Life Guards

Pemberton Billing also founded Fetherflex Records, light flexible double-sided discs pressed in plastic backed by a fabric base; several of these were shown and one was heard. These led to the 'unbreakable' Duo-phone Records of the normal 78 type while the World Records were continued by Vocalion with the 4-in-1 label, but the controller was no longer needed.

It was obvious that much research had been put into uncovering an amazing story, and our thanks to all concerned for an enjoyable evening.

**A London Correspondent**



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## Programme 1994/95

### 1994

Sep 13	THE MATTER OF IDENTITY	John Steane
Sep 27	REGAL ZOOPHONE	Raymond Howarth
Oct 11	FERRIER AND FRIENDS	Paul Campion
Oct 25	SINGERS ABOUT SINGERS	John T. Hughes
Nov 8	WHO CAN THESE PEOPLE BE?	David Mason
Nov 22	THE VIENNA STAATSOPER 1932/1933	Stanley Henig
Dec 13	THE COLUMBIA CATALOGUE	Ronald Taylor

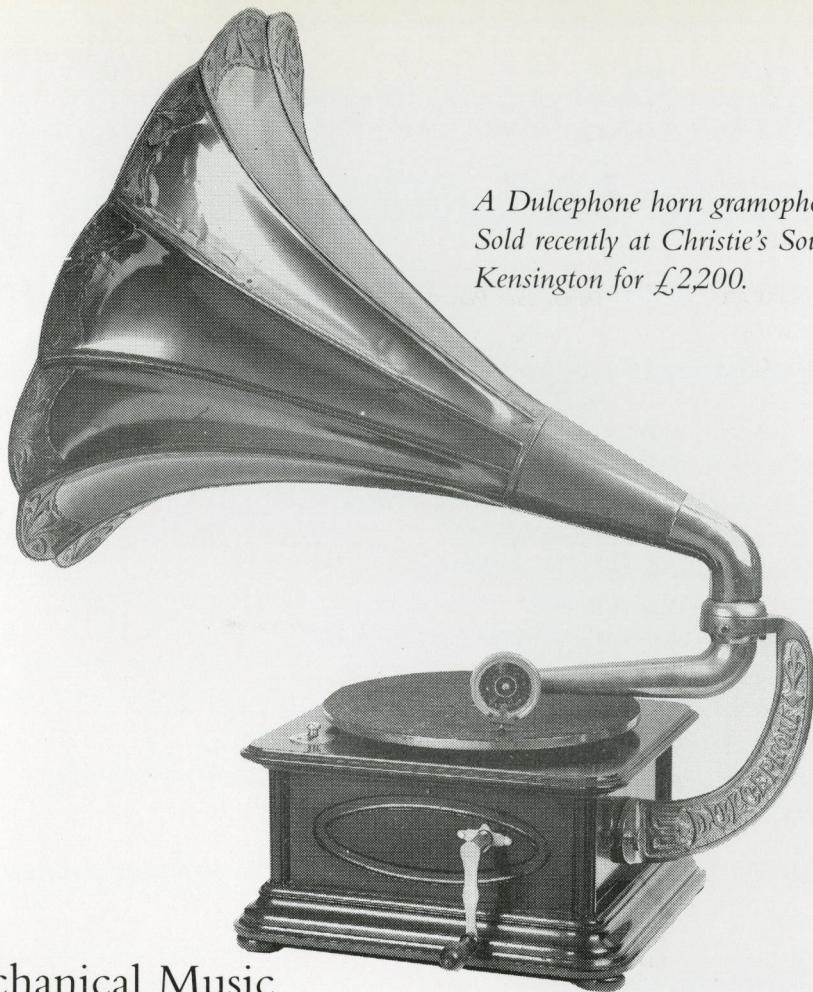
### 1995

Jan 10	SADLER'S WELLS IN THE FORTIES AND FIFTIES	Ian Martin
Jan 24	UNDER THE INFLUENCE	Larry Lustig
Feb 14	ANOTHER GOLDEN AGE? SOME STARTLING NEW SINGERS	Alan Blyth
Feb 28	FOLLOW THE DOG!	Ruth Edge
Mar 14	A PERSONAL SELECTION	Richard Copeman
Mar 28	GLYNDEBOURNE 1934 - 1994	Eileen Miller
Apr 11	NOMS DE GUERRE	Richard Nicholson
Apr 25	SINGERS OF GRAN TEATRO LICEO	John Carter
May 9	(a) A.G.M. (b) COMMEMORATIONS	John Holohan
May 23	'DON'T KNOW THE NAME - CAN'T BE ANY GOOD'	Alan Bilgora
Jun 13	VERISMO - A WIDE DEFINITION	Paul Steinson
Jun 27	PRESIDENT'S CHOICE	Vivian Liff
Jul 11	PORTRAIT OF THE BELOVED SINGER ELISABETH SCHUMANN	Joy Puritz

All Meetings begin at 7:00p.m. and normally close at 9:00p.m.

MEMBERSHIP: £12.00 payable to the Hon. Treasurer at the meetings  
ATTENDANCE FEE per meeting: MEMBERS 50p (inc. coffee) VISITORS £2.00 (inc. coffee)  
Hon Secretary - Paul Lewis, [REDACTED] London NW3 1LA





*A Dulcephone horn gramophone.  
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## Mechanical Music

Auction: London, 8 December 1994  
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